

EXHIBIT

43

NEWS

February 14, 2020

Another journalist attacked in Beirut

LEBANON MIDDLE EAST - NORTH AFRICA CONDEMNING ABUSES CORRUPTION

Mohammad Zbeeb / Facebook



After a reporter specializing in corruption cases became the latest journalist to be physically attacked since the start of a wave of anti-government protests in Lebanon, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the authorities to do what is necessary to ensure that journalists can continue to work at this crucial time for the country.

Mohammad Zbeeb, a business reporter who specializes in covering corruption for the daily newspaper *Al-Akhbar*, was assaulted by three individuals on the night of 12 February in a Beirut carpark near where

he had just participated in a discussion on the economy. He had to be taken to the American University hospital for treatment to his injuries.

A leading figure in the anti-government protest movement that began in October, Zbeeb has written a **series of articles** (<https://www.al-akhbar.com/Author/826>) about the government's responsibility for the economic crisis in Lebanon and, citing statistics, he has often attacked members of the "**oligarchy**" (https://twitter.com/mzbeeb/status/1227884291125805056?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%a-hamra-le-journaliste-mohammad-zbib-denonce-loligarchie.html) on Twitter, calling them "thieves."

This was just the latest physical attack on journalists covering the demonstrations. In some cases, protesters themselves have been the attackers, as when *OTV* reporter **Rima Hamdan** was **surrounded and insulted** (https://www.facebook.com/rima.hamdan.946/posts/10221630____tn__=-R) while covering the blocking of Beirut's Al-Ring bridge on 17 January. Her TV channel supports the Free Patriotic Movement, President Michel Aoun's party.

At other times, reporters have been beaten by security forces even though they made it known they were journalists. This was the case with *Reuters* correspondent **Issam Abdallah** (<https://www.almodon.com/media/2020/1/15/-الاعتداء-على-المصورين-الصحافيين-عصام-عبدالله-ونبيل-اسماعيل>) and **Paula Nawfal** (<https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1198292/paula-nawfal-a-lolj-javais-beau-crier-que-je-suis-journaliste-il-continuait-a-me-frapper-.html>), reporter for the daily *An-Nahar*, attacked by parliamentary security agents, who also destroyed her car.

Because of their coverage of the protests, several journalists with *Al-Jadeed TV*, including **Joelle Hajj Moussa**, **Ramez El Kadi**, **Halima Tabiaa**, **Layal Saad** and **Nancy Sabeh**, and *LBCI* journalist **Dima Sadek** were the targets of a **major harassment campaign**

(https://www.skeyesmedia.org/ar/News/News/18-11-2019/8142) by telephone in November after their personal phone numbers were made public.

“The demonstrations in Lebanon must not be used as pretext by the various political and religious movements to target journalists” said Sabrina Bennoui, the head of RSF’s Middle East desk. “Journalists have a vital role to play at this pivotal time and their reporting must be able to reflect the protest movements and the demands of the protesters. The Lebanese authorities have a duty to prosecute those responsible for the violence and to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that journalists can fulfill their reporting duties.”

Lebanon is ranked 101st out of 180 countries in RSF’s **2019 World Press Freedom Index** (<https://rsf.org/fr/irak>).